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ABSTRACT

Many international exchange opportunities are available for American librarians in overseas work, teaching, and consulting. Exchange agreements can be made using personal contacts, privately funded and government programs, and notices in publications. Internships for Asian librarians are available through a library internship program, which was inaugurated in 1979 at Ohio University, and designed to provide experience in modern library practices and concepts for middle- and upper-level professionals (including management personnel and library science faculty) in some Asian nations. Another cooperative program provides graduate library education at Simmons College and practical training at Ohio University for a staff member from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China. The internship program has special features, including adaptation of the program to individual interns' needs. Internships benefit the participants professionally and strengthen their country's human resources, besides providing rewards for American librarians and libraries and fostering international cooperation and understanding. (Author/LMM)

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INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF LIBRARIANS
AND THE OHIO UNIVERSITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

by

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Paper presented to International Relations Round Table,
American Library Association Annual Conference
Philadelphia, July 12, 1982

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Introduction

"International exchange of librarians" is often interpreted as those bilateral arrangements between institutions to exchange librarians on a short-term basis. The details of such arrangements vary from agreement to agreement and, as a rule, are expected to work out to the mutual advantage of both institutions and of the individuals. But, practically speaking, not all exchanges are bilateral nor on a one to one basis. Some may begin as unilateral and later become bilateral as a result of the relationships established while others may lead to multilateral or other asymmetrical relationships. No matter the form, it is likely that exchanges will require considerable negotiation, patience, and time to finalize a multitude of details. This paper will illustrate the above points by discussing some of the exchange opportunities available for American librarians and then by focusing on the library internship programs offered by the Ohio University Libraries.

Opportunities for American Librarians

Many of the exchange arrangements among American librarians and their foreign counterparts result from personal contacts. While this means that

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those individuals with international connections are most likely to develop further contacts, those wishing to join the international library community are not excluded. One of the media for initial contacts which has been little utilized is the advertisement section of professional journals.¹

Currently, in response to an ad in College & Research Libraries News placed by a French librarian, a colleague is arranging to switch jobs with his French counterpart. The realization of such exchanges requires not only the willingness of both individuals to agree to a mutually satisfactory arrangement but also the strong yet flexible support of their respective library and institutional administrations. This latter is essential as not all exchanges are perfectly matched in terms of specific positions held or the qualifications of each individual; therefore, special administrative actions may be required to make an exchange possible.

In addition to personal contacts, a variety of other approaches may also prove fruitful.

The Fulbright Exchange Program and the Peace Corps, for examples, are two of the best known programs administered by the U.S. Government. The Fulbright Program offers opportunities for teaching or research in professional fields, including library science, in many parts of the world — both developed and less-developed. The Peace Corps, which lists library science as a programming emphasis is suitable for both young and experienced librarians interested in library service in less-developed countries. Opportunities for Peace Corps Volunteers with library background or expertise include teaching, consulting, and service. Although monetarily

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1. Also potentially valuable are the exchange notices sometimes carried in the IFLA Journal.

the Peace Corps may not be the most attractive, the experience itself can be both challenging and rewarding. Two of my colleagues on a field trip to Southeast Asia last year reported encountering Peace Corps Volunteers working in libraries and teaching in library science programs. For such positions the Peace Corps offers a standard of living comparable to locally employed peers within libraries and other institutions. In many Asian cities today, this can be a quite comfortable standard. And, while it is not stressed by Peace Corps, Volunteers receive a "readjustment allowance" of \$175 for each month that they serve at the end of their assignments, reflecting a level of savings that many of us in the U.S. wish we could maintain.

Funded by U.S. government agencies and private foundations, the Committee on Scholarly Communication With the People's Republic of China (a joint standing committee of the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Social Science Research Council) maintains a number of exchange programs with the People's Republic of China. The Committee has a program for American graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to carry out long-term study or research in affiliation with Chinese universities and research institutes; a short-term reciprocal exchange of senior-level Chinese and American scholars; a bilateral conference program; and an exchange of joint working groups in selected fields. Although American librarians have not actively participated in these programs, a visit by a group of Chinese librarians to this country was among the first exchange visits under the auspices of the Committee.

For experienced librarians and library educators, opportunities for short-term consulting or teaching assignments are frequently available through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S.

International Communication Agency, the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization, etc. Some comparable opportunities may also be available through foundations and foreign governments and institutions. With the financial support of the Asian Development Bank and other international agencies, many universities in the developing nations of Asia are embarking on long-term development projects which will require the services of library consultants.

With rising standards of living in many developing countries, some can now offer salaries and employment attractive to librarians from the U.S. In Asia, many American librarians are known to be (or to have been) employed in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, all of which have a strong demand for experienced librarians as they modernize their library services. There is a shortage of trained librarians in many of these countries.

Internships for Asian Librarians

To provide experience in modern library practices and concepts for middle- and upper-level professionals in some Asian nations, Ohio University inaugurated a library internship program in 1979, initially at the request of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Since its inception, the program has been designed to serve two distinct groups of librarians from East and Southeast Asia. The first is comprised of middle or upper management personnel who have been working for several years and are now in need of upgrading their knowledge and skills, particularly with regard to the applications of technology to the information field. This group has since been broadened to include library science faculty, to provide them with practical experience to enhance their teaching capabilities. The

second group includes recent graduates from professional degree programs in the U.S. and has aimed at providing hands on experience with automated systems prior to returning to their home institutions to assume responsible positions.

The geographical preference indicated in this program arises from the strong ties of the Ohio University's Southeast Asia Collection with libraries and librarians from East and Southeast Asian countries. Thus far, three librarians from Thailand, one from Indonesia, and five from Taiwan have completed internships ranging from two to six months (although three months has been the preferred minimum). Among the interns, three are library science faculty and six hold responsible library positions at the middle management level or higher. Three of these also teach part-time in the library science programs of their institutions.

The success of these programs has attracted UNESCO funding for two of the library school faculty last year and two more this Fall, each for three months. Another program which is being carried out in cooperation with the Graduate School of Library and Information Science of Simmons College, with partial funding from UNESCO, provides graduate library education at Simmons and practical training at Ohio University for a staff member from the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China (ISTIC). This program is especially tailored to combine education and training to meet a special need.

The internship programs at Ohio University Libraries²

2. The article by Ron Coplen and Muriel Regan, "Internship Programs in Special Libraries: A Mutually Beneficial Experience for Librarian and Student," in Special Libraries (Vol. 72, No. 1 [January 1981], pp. 31-38)

(Footnote continued)

have, among others, the following special features:

1. As much as possible, the training program for each intern is planned to suit the individual needs of the intern and his/her institution. It takes into consideration the intern's educational background, previous training and experience, and career goals.
2. The length of an internship, normally three to six months, proves to be mutually beneficial for the interns and for the Ohio University Libraries. It provides sufficient time for the interns to be trained in their chosen areas of specialization plus affords an overview and some experience in library management and departmental operations. During the internship period, the Library in return receives the services of the interns. Their area and language expertise are welcome additions to the Southeast Asia Collection and the Cataloging Department. The internships also include attendance at selected library workshops and conferences as well as visits to major libraries in the eastern United States. For instance, within easy driving distance, Columbus is the home of OCLC, Chemical Abstracts Service, and Ohio State University. Several library schools (including Kent State, Case Western Reserve, Pittsburgh, and Indiana) are also conveniently accessible.
3. Although the internships stress modern library concepts and the practice includes computerization and networking such as OCLC online cataloging and interlibrary loan systems, database searches, etc.,

2. (continued)
capably highlights many of the general characteristics of internships and thus the discussion here focuses on characteristics special to international exchanges.

special attention is given to the applicability of the technologies to the interns' home countries. The Library's Southeast Asia Collection, one of the best in the U.S., provides an ideal learning environment for the interns to relate their training to familiar materials and situations.

4. Complementing the Southeast Asia Collection, Ohio University Libraries also has a number of staff members familiar with library development in Asian countries. These professionals are able to guide and advise the interns with regard to their individual needs. Additionally, Ohio University has strong ties with a number of educational institutions in Asia, particularly Malaysia. This is evidenced in the recent joint gift by the Malaysian Government and U.S. corporations to establish the endowed Tun Abūl Razak Chair for Malaysian Studies at Ohio University. These associations which span diverse faculty and administrators contribute to a cordial and supportive working and learning environment for the interns.

Adequate financing is of course essential to implementation of the intern program. Essentially, there are three types of direct costs involved:

1. Travel Expenses. These include the international travel to Ohio and return, local transportation for visits, and the costs of participating in conferences and workshops. Depending on the distance to the home country, the number of visits to be made, and the number of conferences to be attended, there can be considerable variation in cost, but \$3,000 should be considered an absolute minimum for interns from Asia (based on mid-1982 air fares).
2. Living Expenses. These include room and board, insurance, and

personal and incidental expenses. For a rural locale such as Athens, \$600 per month is adequate for subsistence. Obviously, this figure depends on local costs and must be adjusted for inflation.

3. Administrative Expenses. These include the travel expenses (but not salaries) of library staff who will accompany the intern(s) for visits and conferences as well as the cost of telephones, telex, postage, photocopying, and database searching. To this should be added receptions and official entertainment. The minimum estimate for these expenses is about \$1,000.

Applying these figures to a three month internship, the direct costs would be about \$5800. The estimated indirect cost to the University for staff time spent programming, coordinating, supervising, training, and counseling plus overhead will amount to about \$1500 each month for each intern. These indirect costs can be partially and justifiably returned by assigning the intern to work approximately one-half time in a library department. This benefits the intern by deepening his/her understanding of how the library really works and how things are accomplished but at the same time contributes to the library's productivity. An important mutual benefit which cannot be monetized is the exchange of ideas between the interns and the library staff through daily contacts.³ Funding for the internship programs with the Ohio University Libraries has come from a number of sources. These have included full support from UNESCO for four library

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3. The benefits to the institution hosting an intern described in the Coplen and Regan article (ibid., p. 32) are all applicable to the international context and often heightened as a result of the cross-cultural dimension of the interaction.

school faculty from Southeast Asia, shared UNESCO and home-institution support for a technical librarian from China, support for travel and living expenses for five librarians from Taiwan by their universities and information agencies with Ohio University underwriting the administrative costs, and other combinations. U.S. Federal funding under Title VI (Foreign Language and Area Studies) also partially supported two interns from Thailand and, beginning in October 1982, intern support is included in our Title II-C (Strengthening Research Library Resources) project for cataloging Southeast Asian materials. In this project, the intern from Southeast Asia will profit from the opportunity to work in a modern automated library and the Library will profit from having a professional librarian with linguistic and cataloging skills not available in the U.S.

Despite the importance of outside funding, the success of the programs relies on the strong commitment by Ohio University, and particularly its top administration, to international cooperation. And, as is evident above, the support from UNESCO, both financially and through encouragement, has also been vital in the programs' growth.

In summarizing the internship programs, we consider them to have special merit. They are relatively inexpensive in comparison with formal library science education programs and have far more substance than study tours. The programs are particularly advantageous for professional librarians from Third World nations as they are afforded concentrated training and experiences which provide both depth and breadth within a relatively short period. As these individuals occupy or will be occupying responsible positions within the library profession in their own countries, the opportunity to use and understand contemporary technological applications and management processes can impact on the advancement of

entire nations.

Conclusions

International exchanges have many benefits. In the long run, they not only benefit the individuals but also foster inter-institutional cooperation, information sharing, networking, and standardization on a global basis. Library internships, such as those at Ohio University, fulfill an important need. This is evidenced by the growing number of requests received and the availability of external funding. The fact that many institutions are willing to send their librarians to Ohio University Libraries for internship training at their own expense manifests the value of such short-term training. It is hoped that more libraries in the U.S. will open their doors to foreign librarians either on exchange or on internships. Standing in the forefront of modern library developments, the U.S. has much to offer in librarianship. Yet, at the same time, there is much that U.S. librarians and libraries can learn from others through such interchanges.